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ABSTRACT

An interpretive analysis is presented based on a comparative case study of the relationships between college and university faculty and their presidents in 32 institutions of higher education. Data were collected through interviews during campus visits in 1986-87. The study divided the institutions into six different groups, and looked for patterns of similarities and differences in these groups. Additionally, the study was designed so that half were new presidents (appointed between 1984 and 1986) and half were experienced presidents (appointed between 1965 and 1981). Data collected from the study showed that 75% of the newly appointed presidents, and only 25% of the presidents with longer terms of office, enjoyed strong faculty support. When recently appointed presidents were compared with those who were in office longer, it was shown that failed presidents were those who most frequently lost faculty support early in their tenures, while exemplary presidents retained faculty support throughout their terms in office. In the case of some presidents, described as Modal Presidents, faculty support gradually eroded over time. It was hypothesized that approximately half of all presidents are of the modal type, one quarter are failed presidents, and one quarter are exemplary presidents. Contains 31 references. (GLR)

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WILL YOU LOVE ME IN DECEMBER AS YOU DO IN MAY?:

WHY EXPERIENCED COLLEGE PRESIDENTS LOSE FACULTY SUPPORT.

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November, 1990

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This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held at the Red Lion-Jantzen Beach in Portland, Oregon, November 1-4, 1990. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

ABSTRACT

WILL YOU LOVE ME IN DECEMBER AS YOU DO IN MAY?:
WHY EXPERIENCED COLLEGE PRESIDENTS LOSE FACULTY SUPPORT.

Data collected from a diverse group of 32 institutions indicated that 75 percent of newly appointed presidents, but only 25 percent of presidents with longer terms of office, enjoyed strong faculty support. This interpretive analysis based on a comparative case study develops a Stage Theory Of Presidential Separation (STOPS) to suggest how and why faculty support for college presidents often erodes as presidents gain experience in office. The actions of recently appointed presidents are compared with those of presidents with more extended terms to develop a typology of presidential tenure trajectories based on the processes through which both presidents and organizations learn. The typology describes the common characteristics of Modal Presidents who enter office with strong faculty support that gradually erodes over time, and contrasts them with both Failed Presidents who lose faculty support early in their tenures and with Exemplary Presidents who retain faculty support throughout their terms of office. It is hypothesized that approximately half of all presidents follow the modal trajectory, a quarter are failed presidents, and a quarter exemplary presidents.

WILL YOU LOVE ME IN DECEMBER AS YOU DO IN MAY?:

WHY EXPERIENCED COLLEGE PRESIDENTS LOSE FACULTY SUPPORT.[1]

Relationships between college and university faculties and their presidents are often contentious, and recent studies suggest that many campuses may be characterized by an uneasy peace between professors and chief administrative officers. For example, only 57 percent of a national sample of full-time faculty were reported as satisfied with the quality of their chief administrative officers, and only 54 percent with the relationship between administration and faculty on their campus. (Russell, et. al., 1990). Similarly, 60% of the faculty respondents in a 1984 national survey identified their campuses as autocratic, and 64 percent believed the administration to be only "fair" or "poor" (Boyer, 1987). A comparable study conducted five years later indicated that only 49 percent of the faculty respondents believed that their institutions were being effectively managed (Mooney, 1989). The tendency of faculty to criticize presidents has led some observers to comment that "faculty members almost universally discount the performance of their current presidents at a rate that must be 25 to 75 percent below that of other observers" (Kerr and Gade, 1986, p. 44).

The level of faculty dissatisfaction suggests that while some presidents enjoy the support of their faculties, a sizable proportion of others may not. This paper considers the dynamics associated with one potentially important factor related to faculty support - the length of presidential term of office.

Two recent studies suggest that, in general, perceptions of presidential effectiveness may be inversely related to term of office. One study (Fujita, 1990) analyzed intensive interviews of trustee, faculty, and administrative leaders at 32 institutions to determine how they assessed their presidents. Half of the campuses were headed by "new" presidents (in office for three years or less at the time of the interview), and half by "old" presidents (in office for five years or longer). Presidents assessed as good by trustees, administrators, and faculty were considered to have high support. Fujita found that while 50.0 percent of the presidents had high support, there were significant differences in the ratings based on presidential tenure. New presidents had high support at twelve of sixteen campuses (75.0%), while old presidents had high support at only four (25.0%).

Assessments of presidents varied by constituent role. Presidents were evaluated as good by 88.2 percent of board leaders and 87.2 percent of the president's administrative colleagues. In contrast, only 50.9 percent of faculty respondents evaluated their presidents as good. Board and administrative subordinate support remained high as presidents

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[1] Helpful comments and criticisms of early drafts of this paper were made by Richard Chait, Estela Bensimon, Barbara Holland, and Susan Studds.

gained experience in office, but faculty support decreased dramatically.

The other study (Birnbaum, 1986) reported questionnaire data from a stratified random sample of 252 college presidents who were asked to assess on a 100 point scale the level of "institutional leadership" exhibited by the average president, by themselves, and by their predecessors. Presidents consistently rated their predecessors as less effective than average, and themselves as more effective. They rated faculty morale as low under their predecessors, and indicated that it had substantially improved under their own leadership. Self-assessments were unrelated to term of office, so that experienced presidents rated themselves as highly as new presidents, while at the same time they discounted the ratings of the president they replaced. These data indicate not only that presidents may not be well thought of at the time they leave office, but also that presidents believe themselves to be the engines of positive campus change and immune from the same criticisms they level at their predecessors.

Both the Fujita and Birnbaum studies suggest that constituent's perception of presidential performance may change over time, so that a president may be considered as effective at the time of taking office, but less effective at the time of leaving. This paper analyzes faculty descriptions of their presidents, and develops a Stage Theory of Presidential Separation (STOPS) to account for the decline in president-faculty relationships.

Data Sources and Methodology

Data for this paper were collected as part of the Institutional Leadership Project (ILP), a five year longitudinal study of the interaction of trustees, administrators, and faculty in formal leadership positions and their effects on the functioning of 32 institutions selected to reflect diverse institutional types, programs, and structures. The purposive sampling procedure for the ILP is described elsewhere (Birnbaum, Bensimon, and Neumann, 1989). Fujita's (1990) findings relied on this same data base.

This paper is based on a comparative case study of the relationships between faculty and the 32 presidents who were in office during an initial campus visit in 1986-87. The ILP sample was designed so that half were new presidents (appointed between 1984 and 1986), and half were old presidents (appointed between 1965 and 1981). Two other groups of presidents are also referred to in the analysis; "predecessors" who immediately preceded in office the new or old presidents who were the primary subjects of this study, and "replacements" appointed to fill vacancies occurring when new or old presidents left office between the initial campus visit in 1986-7 and the follow-up visit in 1988-89.

Data for the comparative case study were drawn from transcripts of initial campus interviews conducted in 1986-7, and

from individual case reports prepared for each site subsequent to follow-up visits in 1988-89[2]. Each case report summarized interview responses of approximately 12 trustees, administrators, and faculty in formal leadership positions during each of the two campus visits, and included the interviewers assessments of changes in campus functioning during this two-year period. To prepare this multiple case analysis, the 32 case reports were divided by old and new presidents and categorized by expressed level of faculty support (high, mixed or low) to yield six different groups. Assignment to these categories were consistent with Fujita's independent ratings in all 16 cases of high support, and in all but two of the remaining 16 cases. The number of institutions in each group is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The Distribution of New and Old Presidents by Level of Faculty Support.

	Level of Faculty Support		
Presidential Category	High	Mixed	Low
New Presidents (N=16)	12	2	2
Old Presidents (N=16)	4	5	7
Total (N=32)	16	7	9

The case materials in each group were then analyzed using a strategy of explanation building (Yin, 1984), an iterative process involving constant revisions of theory during the sequential development of each individual case. Explanations were sought to respond to three basic research questions: Why do faculty rate new presidents so positively?; Why do faculty rate old presidents so negatively?; and Why are presidents unaware of this change in faculty assessments?

Results of the Comparative Case Study

The comparative case study divided thirty two institutions into six different groups, and looked for patterns of similarities and differences in these groups. Results are presented in two sections, one dealing with presidents with high support, and one with presidents with mixed or low support.

Presidents with High Support

New Presidents. Although the twelve new presidents with high faculty support led institutions of different types, faced different problems, and took different actions, the histories of

[2] These case reports were prepared by Estela M. Bensimon, Barbara Lee, Anna Neumann, and the author.

their campuses and their own actions early in their terms shared several common characteristics.

Their predecessors did not have high faculty support. Faculty felt that progress had stalled under the predecessor, morale was low, and they had great expectations about what the new president would be able to do. Faculty expressed a hope for strong leadership, and deferred criticism during the early part of the new president's term. The succession process was accompanied by faculty perceptions of increased campus well-being.

Although the approaches of these new presidents varied from highly consultative to somewhat directive, they were all seen as seeking input from the faculty and supporting faculty participation in governance. They spent a great deal of time and energy in learning about their new institution and what the faculty expected of them. This sometimes took the form of campus visits prior to their formal appointment, meeting with every faculty department, interviewing every faculty member, or identifying the faculty leadership and consulting with them.

These presidents were all seen as action-oriented, although their actions took different forms. In some cases, they took dramatic steps to restructure the institution, to change senior administrators, to develop strategic plans, or to take charge of marketing and community relations activities. In others, they were seen as devoting extraordinary time and energy to specific problems seen by the faculty as important, such as fund raising or recruitment.

These presidents were seen as supporting and having confidence in their faculties. In return, faculty saw the president as committed to the institution and to faculty well being.

Old Presidents. Four old presidents enjoyed the support of all constituencies, including the faculty. Their institutions differed considerably in size, program, and control, but there were certain elements that uniformly described them. Although one or more of these elements were also seen among presidents without high faculty support, none of the latter group had all.

Old presidents with high support were judged by their faculty leaders as being both technically competent and concerned with people as well as organizational tasks. Concern for people could be accompanied by personal warmth, but did not have to be. Even presidents seen as somewhat aloof were identified as sensitive to the human dimensions of college life.

These presidents were seen as honoring and working within established governance structures, accepting faculty participation in decision making, and being concerned for process. They also had a strong sense of values that were consistent with the purposes and missions of the institution, but at the same time transcended them. Each was an ardent advocate of the institution, but saw the college mission not as a managerial goal but as a means to achieve some larger purpose such as the advancement of knowledge, the provision of

educational opportunity, or the inculcation of ethical values. They were seen as fair and ethical; they kept promises once made, were not afraid to tackle controversial problems, stated their positions, and were not seen as having hidden agendas. As a consequence, they were described as principled, decent, honest, and trustworthy. Each was personally liked and admired.

Although these presidents were seen as totally involved with their campuses, they did not attempt to micro-manage them. Presidential involvement was not interpreted by the faculty as meddling, but accepted as a symbol of expertise, dedication, and a commitment to give selfless precedence to institutional over personal well-being. These presidents were seen as emphasizing the positive rather than the negative aspects of the campus, and building on strengths rather than emphasizing weakness. They were reported as respecting the faculty, listening to them, and being responsive to their concerns. At the same time, they maintained the prerogative to make difficult and controversial decisions, and occasionally to take actions on important matters contrary to the expressed will of the faculty. When these presidents acted contrary to the faculty will, they did so in a manner that reflected their respect for the faculty and for the process.

Presidents with Mixed or Low Support

New Presidents. Because there were only four new presidents with mixed or low faculty support, generalizations are difficult. Each of these new presidents took some specific action early in their term, with little or no faculty consultation, that led to strong faculty disapproval. Their actions were primarily rational responses to specific organizational dilemmas (for example, changing faculty personnel policies to accommodate a budget deficit) which were seen as giving little or no consideration to the collegial, political, or cultural elements of institutional functioning.

Old Presidents. Of the 16 old presidents, five had mixed faculty support, and seven had low faculty support. On the five campuses with mixed support, faculty were either split in their assessment of the president, or described a love-hate relationship in which they acknowledged that the president, although flawed as a leader, had made significant contributions to the college. Faculty reaction to such a president was more likely to be indifference or resigned acceptance than animosity. The dominant faculty hope was not that the president would leave, but that the president would improve.

On the seven campuses with low faculty support, perceptions of presidential weaknesses were not offset by a belief that the president had improved the campuses. Instead, it was frequently stated that the president had inhibited institutional development. Faculty-president relationships were contentious, and the dominant faculty desire was not that the president would improve, but that the president would leave. At four of these campuses, presidents who had lost faculty support still

maintained the support of their boards and administrative colleagues. But at three others the president had lost the support of one of these groups as well.

Nine of the twelve presidents with mixed or low faculty support were criticized as being authoritarian. Although the particular mix of characteristics differed from campus to campus, a composite picture was that of presidents whose emphasis was on achieving tasks, with little or no concern for people. These presidents were variously criticized as being impatient with process, indifferent to faculty participation in governance, micro-managing specific institutional processes or programs, acting too quickly with little or no faculty consultation, being aloof or cold, failing to communicate adequately, being difficult to deal with, not suffering fools gladly, or being unpredictable.

The three presidents not seen as authoritarian were criticized for being passive. Although they entered their institutions with high faculty expectations, they were no longer seen as major players on campus. Passive presidents shared certain characteristics with authoritarian presidents; they were seen as insensitive to faculty criticism, defensive, and unwilling to consult widely. However, while authoritarian presidents emphasized task and ignored relationships, passive presidents seemed concerned with neither.

A Stage Theory of Faculty-President Relationships

The data have indicated that 75 percent of all new presidents but only 25 percent of old presidents in this study enjoyed high faculty support. The analysis that follows is based on the presumption that while old and new presidents may look quite different, in fact they are similar groups seen during different stages in their presidential careers. Data drawn from both groups should illuminate patterns that describe the stages of president-faculty relationships as they develop over time. The propositions presented below provide a coherent and plausible explanation for the findings that have been reported. General propositions, which apply to most presidents, are then followed by specific propositions that apply uniquely to three different tenure trajectories that characterize Modal, Failed, and Exemplary presidents.

General Propositions

Proposition 1. At the time a presidential vacancy occurs, faculty leaders are dissatisfied with their president.

All presidencies begin with a vacancy created by the leave-taking of a predecessor, and it is likely that the predecessor

did not have the confidence of the faculty[3]. This generalization is based on three sources of data; information about predecessor presidents, inferences based on the assessment of old presidents, and the ratings of both new and old presidents who left office during the course of the study. The case reports of 19 campuses included comments on the quality of the president's predecessor. Of these, comments about 16 (84.2%) reflected a poor rating, and 3 (15.8%) a good rating. Comments about predecessors on the other 13 campuses were unclear or missing. Poor ratings were inferred from comments that the predecessor was autocratic, widely disliked, not respected, arbitrary, an absolute and utter disaster, ineffective, or dictatorial. Predecessors were disparaged for being the cause of poor morale, being unable to balance a budget, causing a rupture of college-community relations, or drawing rigid lines between faculty and administration. At best, they were seen as leaving their institutions drifting; at worse, their campuses were described as scenes of open warfare, and the presidents characterized as "double-dealing and dishonest", or "a crook with the morals of a street criminal". At least four were identified as having been fired. A faculty leader said of one

> he[4] was as qualified to run an institution of higher education as an earthworm. ...For most of his term here there was misdirection and chaos. The faculty was oppressed. He governed by fiat.

A second source of information about the support of predecessors is found in faculty assessments of old presidents, because old presidents are more likely than new presidents to leave. Of the 16 old presidents in this study, only four were given good ratings by their faculties.

A third source of information is the level of support enjoyed by the seven presidents who left their positions between our initial and follow-up campus visits, thus providing vacancies to be filled by replacement presidents. Six of these seven (85.7%) were rated as poor by the faculty.

Whether looking at predecessors, old presidents, or those actually leaving presidential office, the conclusions are consistent and provide support for the belief that most presidents are not well-regarded by their faculties at the time they leave office. Faculty pleasure with the predecessor's

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[3] The data suggest that a small number of presidents likely followed in office a president with high faculty support. However, no predecessor was described by any respondent as having high support, and all comparisons made between a new president and a predecessor favored the incumbent. While following a president with strong faculty support might pose problems for a successor, there are no data that indicate whether this in fact happened.

[4] Use of masculine and feminine pronouns does not necessarily accurately represent the gender of the president being described.

leaving may range from quiet satisfaction to elation, as on the campus where the faculty leader said "we felt like 'ding-dong, the wicked witch is dead' when he left."

> Proposition 2. Initial faculty support for an incoming president is high because of three factors that may occur alone or in combination: a) their representatives have participated in the selection process, b) previous dissatisfaction makes change of any kind seem desirable, and c) the new president is seen as possessing attributes that will act as a corrective for the perceived weaknesses of the previous president.

The arrival of a president on a campus is an event with major significance both for the institution and the individual. For the institution, it is the culmination of a lengthy process which has functioned to meet a number of manifest and latent organizational needs (Birnbaum, 1989). Although the data on presidential search processes used in our sample institutions is incomplete, it appears that search committees with faculty representation participated in most selection processes. The elaborate processes of these committees are designed in part to certify the high quality of the candidate eventually selected, and participation in the selection of leaders is apt to increase the initial support of the leader (Hollander, 1987).

Just as faculty tend to blame the previous president for many of the current problems of the campus, so they see the arrival of a new president as a solution to those problems. The case reports confirm the suggestions of others (Kauffman, 1980) that committees actively search for and/or retrospectively report that a portion of the appeal of the replacement president is perceived strength in areas in which the previous president was conspicuously weak. After an aggressive entrepreneur, there is a desire for someone who is conservative and cautious. A tough manager creates a desire for a strong academic, or an externally-oriented president for one who will focus on the campus. The new appointee is welcomed by the campus, and particularly by the faculty who were dissatisfied with the previous president. The campus mood at the time of succession ranges from enthusiasm to euphoria.

The succession process has consequences for the new appointee as well as for the campus. While almost all new presidents have held significant administrative positions in higher education, few (6 of 32 in this study, or 18.8%) had prior presidential experience. The elation of the campus is often matched by the excitement of the new president, who has finally achieved a position that marks the apex of an administrative career.

> Proposition 3. The new president is under pressure to move quickly and take actions that symbolize a change in leadership.

For the campus, the new president is a fresh start - a symbol that "there is a new direction, a new sense that we are working together..., a new sense that we are moving." An administrator commented

> having a new president is like opening a window.... It raises hopes - all those feeling oppressed view a new president as another chance. Expectations rise, and there are subsequent expectations for visible outcomes.

Faculty and other campus constituencies expect that the new president will make decisions and take actions that confirm their judgment in supporting the appointment. Presidents feel that expectation as palpable; said one "[when I arrived] people were poised to go to work, almost saying 'tell me what to do to move the college forward.'" Presidents realize that their first acts may have a profound effect on their terms of office, and they strive to develop an image of skill and decisiveness. One said "the most crucial part of the presidency is the first few months ...the first statements you make will set the overall pace and tone." Presidents who do not seem initially "in charge" may be viewed with concern by the faculty who may ask themselves

> Is he capable? I questioned whether he was strong enough...if he was ricocheting from one crisis to another... When he first came here there was a feeling of relief. But then there were concerns about his leadership. He didn't make decisions, get things into shape.

Such concerns can be allayed by firm actions taken later that permit faculty to retrospectively interpret the delay as a thoughtful approach to problem solving.

> Proposition 4. New presidents try to make sense of a new environment by initiating and responding to communications with various segments of the campus community. This involvement leads new presidents to be seen as responsive to the interests of others.

Presidents are very visible during their first months on the job as they spend time touring the campus, receiving delegations, consulting with campus participants, asking questions, and seeing and being seen. This heightened activity level symbolizes the arrival of new leadership, and helps the president understand patterns of institutional life and make sense of a strange and unfamiliar environment (Bensimon, 1987). Some presidents may engage in these activities primarily as a tactic to increase their own influence; others may consider it necessary to increase their own understanding. Regardless of their motives, however, their initial activities significantly increase the level of campus communications. One faculty leader commented "lots of memos go back and forth. This new administration is much more open than the old one." Another said "people feel free to make suggestions. That is the big difference between [the new president] and her predecessor.... Things are much more open.

There is a flow of communication, both up and down." Presidents are likely during this early part of their term to publicly profess a consultative style, and to formally communicate to the campus their desire to receive input and their openness to both criticism and support. Their efforts at communication are rewarded by initial faculty perceptions of presidential openness, skill, and commitment.

> Proposition 5. During the early phases of their terms, presidents are likely to hear more praise than criticism of their actions. Potential criticism of a new president is muted because the expectation of good leadership overwhelms any evidence to the contrary (the so-called "honeymoon period"), and the succession process has disrupted the social system of the campus and made organized criticism and dissent difficult.

New presidents reorganize structures and initiate new programs, and their actions are usually supported by the faculty rather than attacked. The faculty have a vested interest in believing that the new president is successful in order to justify their previous opposition to the predecessor and their participation in the selection process. Support may be based on substance, but it often depends as much on the expectations and hopes of others, and their willingness to suspend critical judgment. One president, describing his first actions, commented

> I had a window of opportunity to take actions. This was because people here were feeling that the college had been in times of difficulty. There was a feeling that decisions should be made no matter what they might be - that there should not be the need to put everything through a microscope.

Another commented "everyone here had a sense that something needed to be done differently, so I was given an opportunity to show I was doing the right thing before being judged." As new presidents go from forum to forum, and problem to problem, their responses are initially seen as individual events rather than as part of a pattern. The meaning of the president's actions are unclear as they are observed serially, and it takes time for enough information to be collected so that they can be understood retrospectively. Campus coalitions formed in the past to criticize the former president's initiatives are temporarily silenced by the disruption of the succession process. Until the president has done enough to clarify the course of the administration, it is difficult for others to construct a coherent and meaningful interpretation of the president's actions, or to know where potential allies might stand.

These first five general propositions indicate that most presidents follow a predecessor with low faculty support, begin their own terms of office with high support, increase communication, receive praise, and are expected by the campus to act in ways that confirm their new roles - all factors that

should help to promote a successful presidential term. But common beginnings do not necessarily lead to common outcomes, and three different trajectories emerge from the multiple case study; the Modal Presidency, the Failed Presidency, and the Exemplary Presidency. The model of the Modal Presidency was constructed by combining the early stages of the presidential career, as reflected in the cases of new presidents who enjoyed high faculty support[5], with the later stages of old presidents who had the support of their boards and administrative colleagues, but not the faculty. Failed Presidencies are a composite of both old and new presidents who lost the support of the faculty as well as either their administrative colleagues or the board. Exemplary Presidencies are based on the cases of four old presidents who enjoyed the support of all three constituencies.

Propositions on the Dynamics of The Modal Presidency

> Proposition 6. Initial success and muted criticism lead presidents to become more certain, overestimate their effectiveness, become less sensitive to complaints, and diminish two-way communication.

During the honeymoon period, presidents can do little wrong; those who support the president's actions are quick to say so; those who are troubled are apt to engage in watchful waiting rather than overt criticism. But all too soon, presidents are no longer "new." Constituents become less likely to give the president the benefit of the doubt, or excuse presidential judgments with which they disagree on the grounds that the president is not yet familiar with the campus. The press of routine obligations, as well as attending to the continual crises of institutional life, make it difficult to continue to engage in the enthusiastic and non-judgmental processes of interaction and discussion that marked the first phases of their terms. As one administrative leader said, "you can't keep up the pace, the honeymoon ends, people's oxen get gored." Unrealistic expectations are revealed as unfulfilled, and faculty say "when [the new president] came in we were euphoric, hoping for real change. I'm dissatisfied, even though compared to [the predecessor] it's much better."

Presidents who initially communicated with faculty in order to make sense of institutional life now feel less need to do so, and are more willing to develop, and have confidence in, their own interpretations based on their increasing experience. As faculty criticism develops, it may be discounted or ignored as representing the views of unrepresentative cabals. This

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[5] It is too early in their terms to make final judgments, but later some of these presidents may be seen as actually following an Exemplary or a Failed trajectory.

withdrawal from soliciting and responding to faculty influence is often so gradual that it may go unnoticed by the president and even denied when it is pointed out because it is inconsistent with presidential self-perceptions; presidents will avow their commitment to listen to others even as their faculties complain that they do not do so. Faculty come to believe the president is indifferent to faculty interests, does not seek advice, ignores advice that is inconsistent with her own predilections, fails to attend to faculty concerns, or in other ways indicates a lack of respect for the faculty. Hearing this criticism, presidents may come to believe that faculty are being irresponsible, that their leaders are not truly representative, and that as presidents they must ignore petty carping and become even more assertive if the institution is to make progress. They may begin to stress some of the characteristics that are commonly associated with good leadership, such as certainty, courage, distance, and willingness to decide, making it even more difficult for them to appreciate alternate views or to change.

> Proposition 7. As presidents gain experience they communicate and respond more to trustees and other administrators than to faculty.

Institutional problems are often related to resource-acquisition or political support issues created by changes in the external environment. Both the nature of the problems, and the planning of solutions, are likely to be proposed or defined by trustees or other senior administrators, and presidents find themselves spending more time responding to the external community and to their trustees, coordinating boards, and administrative colleagues, and less time with the faculty. When more than routine communication with faculty take place, it is likely to be with faculty who are disgruntled; the president may therefore interact with a disproportionate number of activists and dissidents. Presidential enthusiasm and energy can be quickly eroded by the constant press of college life, and the belief that one's efforts may not be truly appreciated.

As presidents find less fulfillment in their interaction with faculty, they find increasing comfort in their administrative colleagues. One of the first acts of most new presidents is to restructure their administration to develop their own teams. These administrators owe their positions to the president and actively participate with the president in developing the policies to which the faculty now object. Their support of the president bolster the president's self-assessment of competence even as faculty backing diminishes. This tendency for leaders and their teams to reinforce their common views, isolate themselves from disconfirming evidence, and become increasingly rigid and resistant to change over time has been noted in other organizational settings (Katz, 1982; Pfeffer, 1983; Finkelstein and Hambrick, 1990).

Presidents may retain the support of their boards and colleagues even as they lose the support of the faculty because the three groups employ different criteria to assess presidential effectiveness. Fujita (1990) found that while trustees were most likely to assess presidents based on their perceived competence and commitment, and administrators made judgments based on competence and involvement, faculty based their judgments primarily on the president's willingness to be influenced and the president's respect for the institution's culture.

Proposition on the Dynamics of The Failed Presidency

Failed presidencies begin like modal presidencies, but end with the president losing the confidence of the faculty, as well as of either the board or administrative colleagues.

> Proposition 9. Failed presidencies are created when presidents are seen as violating faculty rights by responding to a perceived crisis by taking precipitant action without appropriate consultation, or when authoritarian leadership is not accompanied by conspicuous institutional success. The development of failed presidencies may be accentuated if the presidential selection process is not considered legitimate.

Failed presidents see leadership as a process of downward influence. The most common cause of a failed presidency is taking precipitant action, with either token or no consultation, usually early in the presidential career. It almost always involves a task-oriented, rational managerial act that appears insensitive to the human aspects of organization and misreads faculty culture. Faculty described one such situation:

> the president notified the faculty [of his action] but he didn't negotiate or involve them. The president thought he could appeal to the faculty, show them the problem, tell them this is essential to be done, and show them the outcomes would be minimal.

The president expected that his decision would be accepted by the faculty because it was objectively rational. Instead, it was considered an outrageous violation of faculty status and rights. Cases like this may sometimes lead to early presidential departure, but presidents who are indifferent to faculty views, and whose boards are unable or unwilling to intercede, can weather the immediate storm and continue a decade or longer in office. In either case, the incident remains freshly in the faculty mind, and is recited by them as a crucial turning point in the politics of the campus. One faculty member said of an incident of long ago "she acted in a manner contrary to faculty rights...her reaction [to the situation] ended her career." Another on a different campus said about an early presidential action seen as anti-faculty "he got off to a very bad start and never recovered. There is manifest distrust of him in the faculty.... He simply does not understand the human reaction to

this kind of thing." Boards or administrative colleagues may have initially supported the president's action, but the president's inability to work constructively with the faculty from that point forward eventually leads to loss of their support as well. A few failed presidencies may not have a precipitating event, but reflect instead a steady erosion of confidence in a president seen as both authoritarian and incompetent.

Presidents whose selection process is seen as illegitimate by their faculties are at special risk for a failed presidency. They enter office without the expectation of success that provides a honeymoon to the Modal President. While faculty cognitive biases provide more support for modal presidents than is objectively warranted during their early terms, the same principles operate negatively to overly criticize failed presidents. This criticism may remain muted until it is provoked by a particularly grievous presidential action which the faculty see as contrary to their rights.

Propositions on the Dynamics of The Exemplary Presidency

> Proposition 9. Exemplary presidents maintain faculty support by sustaining over time the enthusiasm, institutional commitment, desire to interact with faculty, and openness to influence that typifies new presidents.

Exemplary presidents enter office with high faculty support, and maintain that support through the end of their term. They do this primarily by continuing to act as new presidents even as they mature in office. Their most important characteristic is that they are seen as continuing to respond to the faculty and as willing to remain open to faculty influence. While modal presidents treat communication and interaction as instrumental devices which become less important once they have learned about the campus, exemplary presidents are more likely to view them as essential and continuing components of evolving communities. The modal president sees communication as a means to an end; the exemplary president sees it as an end in itself.

Just as the dynamics that lead to modal or failed presidencies tend to be self-reinforcing, so too are the dynamics of exemplary presidencies. Because exemplary presidents identify faculty as the institution's strength, support faculty governance and accept faculty influence, they tend to facilitate the development of responsible faculty leaders. These presidents find in turn that interaction with faculty is rewarding and helpful, thus supporting their continued interaction.

Discussion

The Stage Theory of Presidential Separation (STOPS) suggests that presidents move through different stages in their institutional careers based on changes in the degree of two-way communication with their faculty. When high levels of

communication and mutual influence are maintained, faculty support of the president remains strong. But when reciprocity STOPS, and presidents separate themselves from their faculty, faculty support diminishes.

New college presidents are faced with strong - and initially self-fulfilling - expectations that they will act to correct the deficiencies of their predecessor. They are likely initially to be judged as successful because their actions appear to demonstrate a high level of concern for constituent interests (a function of the new president's learning and sense-making processes), their approach or focus of attention are seen as a welcome counterbalance to that of the previous incumbent, and the succession crisis disturbs ongoing social systems and mutes criticism. Some new presidents are able to maintain the commitment and energy with which they began their tenure and, of greatest importance, remain accessible to faculty. They are likely to become exemplary presidents. Other new presidents are likely to ignore faculty and, early in their career, take dramatic action in the name of rationality that immediately costs them faculty support. They are likely to become failed presidents.

Most presidents follow a middle path. They begin their terms with increased communication and high faculty support which will gradually erode over time. As these new presidents gain experience they find less need to rely on the perceptions of others to "make sense" of the institution. They become more likely to depend on their own interpretations and judgments, less likely to solicit counsel, and therefore become seen as less amenable to constituent influence. At the same time, they have been unable to fulfill earlier unrealistic expectations (despite faculty perceptions, the campuses' problems were more likely to have been created by exogenous events rather than presidential shortcomings). Presidential behaviors initially applauded as correcting past deficiencies may continue even when they are no longer appropriate, and over time become problematic in themselves. Perceptions of presidential effectiveness diminish, and when they leave the cycle begins again with their replacement.

Trustees, administrators, and faculty have different perceptions of presidential effectiveness, and it is possible for presidents to maintain trustee and administration support even as they become increasingly distant from the faculty. Through cognitive processes of attribution and selective attention, presidents may rely on trustee and administration judgments to assess their own effectiveness. The common tendency to selectively seek information that supports their own position makes it possible for presidents to become even more certain of their positions as they make poor decisions (O'Reilly, 1990). Indications of faculty dissatisfaction may be rationalized, and insulated presidents may remain unaware of the extent of faculty concern.

College presidents enter their roles believing that they are effective institutional leaders. This belief is based on their previous accomplishments in positions of increasing institutional status, and confirmed by their selection as president over other candidates in a competitive search process. It is reinforced by an initial honeymoon period created by campus constituencies eager to welcome a champion who will correct the deficiencies of a predecessor, and predisposed by their participation in the selection process to see the new president as a legitimate leader whose actions are improving institutional functioning. In their desire to affirm the succession process as a new beginning for the institution, constituents may initially rationalize presidential shortcomings, and withhold negative feedback.

This common beginning leads to three divergent paths, and whether a presidency follows a modal, failed, or exemplary trajectory is related to the characteristics of the president, the history of the institution, the nature of the environment, and luck. These three presidential trajectories are retrospective inventions that can be spoken of with some confidence only of current presidents who have been in office for extended periods, and with assurance only at the conclusion of a career. Predicting the careers of new presidents is fraught with difficulty, since exemplary and modal presidents may look very much alike as they begin their terms, and differences in faculty support become evident only over time.

Failed and modal presidents too may not initially look dissimilar, and their futures may be differentiated as much by the misfortune of having to face early in their tenure a difficult decision during a period of institutional stress as by differences in skill or temperament. Nevertheless, trajectories of old presidents suggests some patterns of presidential thinking and action that may be instructive to those entering the role.

Factors related to trajectories.

Exemplary presidents were more likely than others to be cognitively complex and therefore able to interpret institutional life through multiple perspectives (Birnbaum, 1988; Bensimon, in press). Of the old presidents in this study, ILP data indicated that three of the four with high faculty support were also seen by constituencies as highly complex; three of the five presidents with mixed support were seen as of medium complexity, and six of the seven with low faculty support were assessed as having low complexity. Exemplary presidents were less likely than others to use linear strategy (no exemplary president used linear strategy, but two of five presidents with mixed support and five of seven presidents with no faculty support did) and adaptive strategy (Neumann, 1989; Chaffee, 1984) and more likely to use interpretive strategy. Exemplary presidents emphasized responsiveness to and interaction with faculty, and therefore viewed leadership as a process of social exchange based on reciprocity and mutual influence (Hollander, 1987). They shared authority through their support of governance systems, and their

respectful treatment of faculty leaders and expressed faculty will. They viewed their institutions as collective enterprises, and their concern with task was integrated with and inseparable from with their concern for people and process. These presidents "took the role of faculty" (Bensimon, 1990), were seen by the faculty as being like them, and as acting in a manner consistent with faculty views of reality. As a consequence, they had extraordinary influence in their organizations. One president said, "by sharing influence I have greatly increased my own influence. They know I'm willing to listen so they listen to me... I think the college is a political system. [The president] can't force others to do something, only persuade." The dominant relationship between president and faculty was collaborative.

Modal presidents took a more linear view of influence sharing as a means towards task achievement, and as a constraint to be overcome. They entered office believing that their ability to influence others depended on understanding the perceptions of reality held by constituents. But as they gained experience, the need for presidential sense-making decreased and they were likely to become increasingly focussed on task accomplishment and to give less attention to interacting with faculty before making decisions. Because presidents are usually quite capable, even their unilateral decisions can be objectively sound. Faculty may agree with the president's decisions, but remain uncommitted to them because they disapprove of the process through which they were made. Presidents who remove themselves from faculty influence can be seen by faculty as intelligent, logical, and competent, but still be criticized for not giving sufficient attention to the human side of the organizational life. A faculty leader commented unhappily about one such president:

> He can't seem to function collegially. He is a military commander and we are his captains to whom he issues orders. He does not appreciate advice that is contrary to what he wants.

Presidents often remained unaware that they had lost faculty support because they developed self-sealing systems of interaction with supportive constituencies that reinforced their views of effectiveness. For institutions with modal presidents, the dominant relationship between president and faculty was competitive.

Failed presidents, even more than modal presidents, emphasized linear and directive orientations to leadership. When faced with a critical situation, they were likely to "take charge" and make unilateral decisions. These presidents were more likely than others to see the faculty as the cause of institutional problems, and the president's solutions were likely to conflict with basic faculty values. For institutions with failed presidents, the dominant relationship between president and faculty was adversarial.

Since institutions in the ILP were not selected through random sampling, these data cannot be used statistically to

generalize to the universe of higher education. However, students of higher education would probably not find implausible a hypothesis based on this study that by the time they leave office approximately one fourth of all incumbents will have followed the trajectory of exemplary presidents, one fourth of failed presidents, and one half of modal presidents. The estimate leads to two questions. First, does faculty support make a difference? Second, is it possible to improve the proportion of exemplary presidents, and reduce the proportion of failed ones?

Does faculty support make a difference?

Because governance in higher education is usually predicated on shared authority and mutual regard between faculty and administration, it might be believed that erosion of faculty support for a president can diminish the president's effectiveness. Although a positive relationship between faculty influence, satisfaction and morale on one hand, and institutional functioning on the other, would be accepted by many academics as an article of faith, there is surprisingly little evidence to support it. Meta-analysis of the effects of influence on satisfaction and productivity in organizations in general (Miller and Monge, 1986) show only modest relationships. In higher education, it has been suggested that faculty access to information, participation in decision making, and feelings of empowerment (Rice and Austin, 1988; Anderson, 1983) may affect morale, but there is little evidence concerning effects on performance.

Two types of data in this study provide some support for the idea that faculty support of their president makes a difference. A review of the development of the campuses of the four old exemplary presidents indicated that each institution underwent significant programmatic or structural change during the president's tenure, each campus was conspicuously successful when compared with similar institutions, and faculty attributed campus success to the president's leadership. Success in each case was based not only on internal judgments of progress and well-being, but on external assessments and evidence as well, such as reports of prestigious visiting teams, commentary in scholarly journals, or statistics regarding growth of enrollments or research capabilities.

In addition, the ILP collected campus follow-up data two years after the presidential assessments reported here to determine the relationship between faculty support and faculty perceptions of campus improvement. Faculty on half of the campuses with new presidents (who on average enjoyed high support) believed two years later that overall the campus had improved; faculty on seven campuses where the same old president was in office during both the initial and the follow-up study years, saw the campus as unchanged. But on six of those nine campuses at which old presidents (who on average enjoyed low support) had either left or had publicly announced their

intention to leave, faculty saw the institution as improved. It appears that, on average, presidents were seen by faculty as having a positive effect on campus functioning at two times in their careers; when they arrived (to replace a predecessor president) and when they left (to make way for a replacement president).

These data do not indicate whether exemplary presidents create campus improvement, or campus improvement creates exemplary presidents. They do not allow us to judge if campus changes seen by faculty as new presidents replace old ones reflect substantive improvement, or filtered perceptions and attributions. But in either case the data indicate some form of relationship between presidential support and faculty morale.

Does presidential support affect institutional outcomes? Interview data suggests that most modal presidents who complete their terms of office with low faculty support were still able to effectively manage their institutions. The modal president, although not loved by the faculty, was still be respected, and as long as the support of trustees and administrative colleagues was maintained could influence through the use of legitimate, reward, and expert power (French and Raven, 1968). Often even severe critics grudgingly agreed that the institution had improved under the leadership of presidents not liked by faculty, and they recognized that the controlling behavior that they saw undesirable when focussed inside had served the campus well to protect it from external attack. On one campus on which the president did not have strong faculty support, a faculty leader who described a president as authoritarian and autocratic went on to say that he was effective and that "[the campus] is better off than it would have been with the leadership of another president."

The evidence on the effects of different presidential trajectories is thus conflicting. One way of understanding this is by recognizing that two different levels of analysis may be involved, one dealing with symbolic outcomes and the other with substantive results. Although there is a tendency to treat the two as related, there is no necessary reason for this to be so. The ability of leaders to influence organizational interpretations that lead to satisfaction may be only loosely coupled to their ability to influence substantive organizational outcomes (Pfeffer, 1981).

Failed presidents lose the ability to constructively influence either institutional processes and outcomes or symbolic interpretations. Exemplary presidents are able to influence both the way their institutions are managed and the interpretations that define the reality of other organizational participants. Exemplary presidents come closer than others to meeting the definition of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985), although they do not attempt to change institutional values as much as stress certain values already present in the institution. Modal presidents are more transactional. They can manage institutional processes, but cannot influence through

referent power and are unable to affect the symbolic life of the campus. This loss may limit their ability to develop interpretative strategies that may be critical to institutions under certain circumstances, or to institute major programs of institutional change (Birnbaum, 1990), but may not ordinarily be important. For most presidents, most of the time, the linear and adaptive strategies available to them may be sufficient and appropriate.

Can presidential trajectories be changed?

Trajectories, once established, become self-reinforcing and difficult to change. Based on data in this study, the exceptions to this generalization are few. One old president, later considered exemplary, described how she modified her behavior early in her term from authoritarian to consultative:

> [when I took office] I didn't have a clear picture of leadership. I had a more authoritarian view. In the early days I had lots of confrontations with students, faculty, and union leaders....But I soon realized I could not get much done that way.

Another old president changed late in his tenure and increased faculty support, when, for reasons that were not clear, he was seen by faculty leaders as "more willing to talk to faculty...[It is like] a brand new president with different methods of operation." These examples suggest that improvement is possible, albeit infrequent.

Not enough is known about exemplary presidents to provide useful guidance for their preparation or selection. Fujita (1990) found that exemplary presidents were more likely than others to have had a previous presidency, suggesting the value of prior experience. This finding leads only to counsel that is as obvious as it is impractical: No one should ever be appointed a president for the first time. Other possible explanations for their success, such as their personalities, the match between institution and person, or luck, may be justified in individual cases but offer little advice about whether there are changes in behaviors under presidential control that could improve the probabilities of an exemplary trajectory.

Our limited knowledge makes calls for more exemplary presidents an exercise in rhetoric. It is probably more useful instead to try and improve the sensitivity of modal presidents to prevent them from becoming failed presidents. This suggests the desirability of helping presidential aspirants become more complex, and overcoming their tendency to create the self-sealing cycles of erroneous self-perception of effectiveness that makes learning difficult.

The importance of developing more complex views of organizational and leadership is based primarily on considering failed presidents. All failed presidents were in institutions that had undergone some significant stress related to resources. Failed presidents almost uniformly had a linear view of

leadership; under pressure they acted expediently and took unilateral action to respond to what they perceived as a threatening environment. Because their strategies tended to be linear, they saw few alternatives to the courses of action that they followed, and believed that they had no choice in what they did. Moreover, they displayed the common distortion of maintaining or even increasing their commitment to the actions they took, regardless of negative outcomes, in order to cognitively justify their past decisions (Staw, 1981).

In contrast, since environments are not "givens" but are themselves socially constructed and enacted (Weick, 1979), more complex presidents were able to respond to similar problems with a repertoire of behaviors and approaches. Firing faculty or reducing salaries was not the only way to respond to financial crisis, and other presidents responded with strategies that included taking risks on new projects that publicly signified faith in the future, or reinterpreting the institution's mission to develop pride in doing more with less.

Cognitive complexity has many elements. It includes the ability to see the institution from a number of alternative perspectives, balancing a concern for people with a concern for task, integrating opposing ideas and adapting them to the task at hand, and responding to potentially threatening environmental forces in ways that are also seen as reflecting values such as honesty, integrity, and academic principles. But cognitive complexity, while important was by itself not enough. Although data indicated that exemplary presidents were more likely to be cognitively complex, they also indicated that not all cognitively complex presidents were exemplary. Something more was required. This "something more" appeared to be related to the ability to maintain communications with the faculty. Communications in this sense does not refer merely to a managerial concern for the transmission of information, but an authentic commitment to engage in a reciprocal process of sharing influence.

A paraphrase of the old song asks "Will faculties love their presidents in the December of their careers as they did in May?" The data presented in this study indicate they might, as long as presidents maintain the enthusiasm, openness, commitment to interaction, and desire to learn that they had when they came to the job. But if they become bored, jaded, self-centered, distant, sure of their judgment, and less subject to influence, love will erode. Another old song reminds us that old soldiers never die, they just fade away. In a comparable vein, it may be said as well that old presidents never die; they just lose their faculties.

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